

REMARKS

The Office Action of August 27, 2004 has been received and considered. Claims 7, 13, 24 and 30 have been amended. Claims 32 and 33 have been added. Reconsideration of the application in view of the above amendments and following remarks and allowance of the pending claims is respectfully requested. Each of the Examiner's rejections is discussed below.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 1-5, 8-12 and 14-21 are allowed, that claims 7, 13, 24 and 30 would be allowable if rewritten to address the Examiner's objections, and that claims 23-26, 29 and 30 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Since independent claim 6 is believed to be allowable, as discussed below, claims 23-26, 29 and 30, which depend from claim 6, are believed to be allowable in their present form.

Claim Objections

Claim 7 has been objected to on the grounds that the phrase "the first cam engaging member" should be changed at various locations. Claim 7 has been amended in non-limiting fashion to more clearly define the invention, as suggested by the Examiner. Claim 7 is now believed to be in proper form.

Claim 13 has been objected to on the grounds that the phrases "the first cam engaging member" and "the second cam engaging member" should be changed at various locations. Claim 13 has been amended in non-limiting fashion to more clearly define the invention, as suggested by the Examiner. Claim 13 is now believed to be in proper form.

Claim 24 has been objected to on the grounds that the phrase "claim 6" should be changed to read "claim 23." Claim 24 has been amended in non-limiting fashion to correct this typographical error, as suggested by the Examiner. Claim 24 is now believed to be in proper form.

Claim 30 has been objected to on the grounds that the phrase “the primary camming surface of each primary pawl” should read -- the first pair of slots--. This objection is respectfully traversed. Applicant respectfully submits that claim 30 is correct in its present form.

Each primary camming surface of the primary pawl engages the second cam engaging member of a corresponding primary pawl to drive the primary pawl into the engaged position. As can be seen in the embodiment illustrated in Fig. 5, “[a] pair of diametrically opposed primary camming surfaces 80 are formed along the peripheral edge of flange 78 [of primary cam 76] and engage cam engaging surfaces 68 of primary pawls 54....” (page 13, lines 6-8) Additionally with respect to Fig. 5, the specification recites that “camming surfaces 80 of primary cam 76 are in an engaged position with cam engaging surfaces 68 of primary pawls 54, such that pawls 54 are in their radially outward position....” (page 15, paragraph 35, lines 5-8.)

Section 102

Claims 6, 22, 27 and 28 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0096925 to Uramichi (“Uramichi”). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Uramichi discloses a seat hinge assembly having a stationary disc 11 and a movable disc 12. Slide pawls 15A-D have teeth 15b that engage ratchet 12c on movable disc 12.

Uramichi fails to disclose or make obvious a reclining vehicle seat hinge assembly including a pair of primary pawls and a pair of secondary pawls, where the secondary pawls have a construction identical to that of the primary pawls, as required by independent claim 6. Of the four pawls 15A-D, the pawl 15A has a construction that is different from pawls 15B-D. As noted in Uramichi, “the slide pawl 15a is different only in a specific function from the other pawls 15B, 15C, and 15D.” (page 2, paragraph 26, lines 2-4.)

Further, Uramichi specifically recites that “the cam pin 15e of the slide pawl 15A is formed

to be slightly longer than those of the other slide pawls 15.” As described in greater detail throughout the specification, cam pin 15e of slide pawl 15A serves as the only cam pin connected with unlock plate 19, such that operation of unlock plate 19 requires this different cam pin. Thus, not only is slide pawl 15A not identical to the other pawls, it would not function properly if it were identical to the others. Consequently the limitation of identical pawls is not found in Uramichi, and identical slide pawls would not even be obvious in view of Uramichi, since identical pawls would defeat the purpose of cam pin 15e of slide pawl 15A of Uramichi.

Accordingly, the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn.

Section 103

Claim 31 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Uramichi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,003,945 to Kojima (“Kojima”). Kojima is recited as disclosing a cooperating washer. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Kojima fails to overcome the deficiencies of Uramichi discussed above. Specifically, Kojima fails to disclose or make obvious a reclining vehicle seat hinge assembly including a pair of primary pawls and a pair of secondary pawls, where the secondary pawls have a construction identical to that of the primary pawls, as required by independent claim 6, from which claim 31 depends.

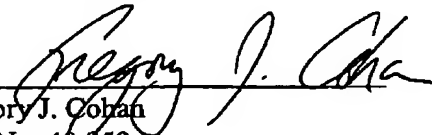
Accordingly, the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

Pending claims 1-33 are believed to be in form for allowance, and an indication to that effect is respectfully requested at this time. Please apply any charges or credits to Deposit Account No. 19-0733.

Respectfully submitted,

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By 
Gregory J. Coban
Reg. No. 40,959
BANNER & WITCOFF, LTD.
28 State Street, 28th Floor
Boston, MA 02109
(617) 720-9600